

Parsons Nursery, Cone Drying Shed  
South side of U.S. Route 219, .25 miles  
southeast of Parsons  
Parsons Vicinity  
Tucker County  
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-237-J

HABS  
WVA  
47-PARS.V,  
15-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HABS  
WVA  
47-PARSON,  
15-

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

HABS No. WV-237-J

PARSONS NURSERY, Cone Drying Shed

Location: South side of U. S. Route 219, .25 miles  
southeast of Parsons, Tucker County, West  
Virginia

USGS Parsons Quadrangle, Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates: 17.614244.4327550

Present Owner: Monongahela National Forest  
Department of Agriculture  
Sycamore Street, Box 1548  
Elkins, WV 26241

Last Occupant: Department of Natural Resources  
State of West Virginia

Last Use: Cone drying building; vacant

Significance: The cone drying shed was built in 1934-35  
with Forest Service general operating funds,  
as a part of the Parsons Nursery of the  
Monongahela National Forest. It was used to  
air dry red spruce cones and white pine cones  
collected in the wild so that the seeds could  
be extracted and planted. For overview of  
Parsons Nursery, see HABS No. WV-237.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1934-35, derived from a photograph dated May, 1935, that shows the cone drying shed (WV-237-16).
2. Architect: Neither architect nor landscape architect are known.
3. Original and present owner: Monongahela National Forest.
4. Builder: The cone drying shed was constructed for Monongahela National Forest by contract labor, according to John King.
5. Original Plans: None.
6. Alterations and additions: None. Building to be demolished in 1990.

B. Historical Context:

The cone drying shed was used to air dry red spruce and white pine cones collected in the wild. The Parsons Nursery had members of the Civilian Conservation Corps collect cones, bought cones from local people and from farm markets. When collected by CCC members, the boys climbed the spruce trees, gathered cones and threw them to other boys on the ground who put the cones in backpack baskets. The cones were sticky, covered in droplets of pitch. It was a messy job, requiring frequent hand washing with kerosene. After 1951, nursery manager Alvin Allison and a nursery crew collected spruce cones by stealing the cash of cones stored in hollow trees stumps by red squirrels. White pine cones were collected throughout Greenbrier, Randolph, and Pocahontas Counties.

Cones were laid in a single layer on wire mesh trays. The trays slid into permanent racks built on the east side of the cone drying shed. (See Decorative Features and Historic Furnishings for descriptions of racks and trays.) When the trays were in place, the doors on the sides of the cone drying shed were raised and tied open. The doors could be adjusted so that drying could continue even when the weather was damp. The location of the shed on the bank of the river meant that daily breezes blew off the cool water toward the sun-heated nursery plots.

Cones were dried from the time they were collected in the fall until winter, when the cones were moved to trays in the

seed extractor building.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The cone drying shed is one of a complex of Forest Service nursery buildings constructed in a simple, rustic, gable-roofed, shingle style. This building uses native materials available in Monongahela National Forest, such as chestnut sheathing boards and joists and it follows the local convention of exterior diagonal wind-brace sheathing used under sawn cedar shingle siding.
2. Condition of fabric: The November, 1985, flood damaged the north door frame. Otherwise the building is structurally sound but needs cleaning.

### B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: A one-story, rectangular plan, this building is 18'-3" x 60'-6". It is one bay wide and one bay deep. It has no attic.
2. Foundation: 8" poured concrete wall with concrete pad.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are wood shingled with random width cedar cut shingles applied in courses of 5-1/4" exposure. There are 4-1/2" plain yellow-painted corner boards. The "1x6" chestnut sheathing is placed diagonally, but without chevron, centered joints. The foundation-roof height at the corner is 8'-8", 14'-9" at the peak.
4. Structural system: The wood frame walls are "2x4's", on 16" centers, covered in 1" thick diagonal sheathing boards--a typical West Virginia mountain framing system. The wall sill is "2x6", the wall plate is "4x4". The rafters are "2x6's" on 24" centers with "2x6" wall ties and "1x6" ridge board. Studs, sills, plates and rafters are pine; sheathing is chestnut.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: None.
6. Chimneys: None.
7. Openings
  - a. Doorways and doors: The south doorway has 3-1/2" jambs, 4-1/4" head, butt-jointed. The doorway is

faced with "1x6" boards. There is a weather strip placed on the outside at the joint of the facing and the jamb. It is 1" x 1-1/2" with the projecting edge rounded and facing out. There are two sliding south doors 8'-6" tall. They are constructed with 4-1/2" side, top and bottom stiles. The mid-stile is 5-1/2". Each door has a diagonal stile in the lower half, 5-1/2". The panels show vertical beaded, tongue-and-groove boards, on either side. The north doorway was enlarged after the flood of November, 1985; the doors are missing. Doorway trim and doors are painted yellow.

- b. Windows and shutters: Each side of the building has one continuous opening, 3'-2" x 55'-10-1/2". The jambs, head and bottom frame are 4-1/2", and are painted yellow. The opening is covered in 1/4" metal mesh. In between each shutter that covers the opening is a 1-1/2" strip. Each long side has fourteen, hinged, exterior yellow-painted wooden shutters 3'-2" x 3'-10-1/2". They are made of "1x6" shiplap siding and "1x4" battens. Each is hinged at the top, and has a 2" centered keyhole to secure a rope. Every other rafter has a hole to secure the shutter open. On the bottom frame, there is a wooden wing-nut closure for each shutter.
8. Roof: The gable roof has asbestos shingles, a replacement of the original sawn cedar shingles. There are three, ridge-mounted, circular, galvanized ventilator stacks on the roof. The roof has exposed rafter ends with no fascia. Every other rafter has 2" extensions to affix the rectangular wooden gutter beyond the swing of the shutters (see WV-237-J-3). On each gable end, the "2x8" rake board is notched so that the "4x4" wall plate and "4x4" ridge piece extends 1/2" past the rake boards. The gable end overhang is 12-1/2", including the rake board; the eave overhang is 12-1/2". The cornice, gutters, and exposed rafter ends are painted yellow.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The rectangular building is one bay wide and one bay deep without attic. The framing is exposed. Drying racks are on the east side.
- 2. Stairways: None.
- 3. Flooring: The floor is unpainted concrete.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: The framing is exposed. The

interior height is 14'-7".

5. Openings: There is no interior trim to doors or shutter openings.
  6. Decorative features and trim: Drying rack frames are made of vertical "2x4's", at the front, middle and rear of each rack bay. Each bay accommodates six trays, 4' wide. The 11" space for each tray is defined by horizontal "2x4's" nailed between the vertical "2x4's". On top of the "2x4's" is a floor of "1x6" boards. On top of each floor, at the sides of each bay, are "1x6" blocks used as runners to support the trays. Mounted on the vertical sides of each bay are wooden wing-nuts to keep the trays from moving when they are set to dry. The drying racks are made of chestnut and pine lumber.
  7. Hardware: The sliding door hardware is a 2-1/2" iron pipe, 6' long. The doors are hung on four iron straps 1-3/4" x 7". There is a 2" x 2" iron keeper; the hasp is missing. The heart-shaped pulls are cast iron. All hardware is painted yellow.
  8. Mechanical equipment: There never has been heat or plumbing. Greenfield electrical cable is surface mounted to ceramic ceiling fixtures.
  9. Original furnishings: The cone drying trays are made of chestnut lumber. Each tray is made of "1x4" sides with lap-jointed corners with metal 3" iron angles fastened over each corner. The bottom is 1/4" wire mesh; the top is open. Trays are 6' x 4'.
- D. Site: The building faces southeast, 147°30' . It survives on its original site, together with most of the original nursery structures. Three red spruces (*Picea rubens*), 21/2' in diameter are 23' from the east side of the building, along the road.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

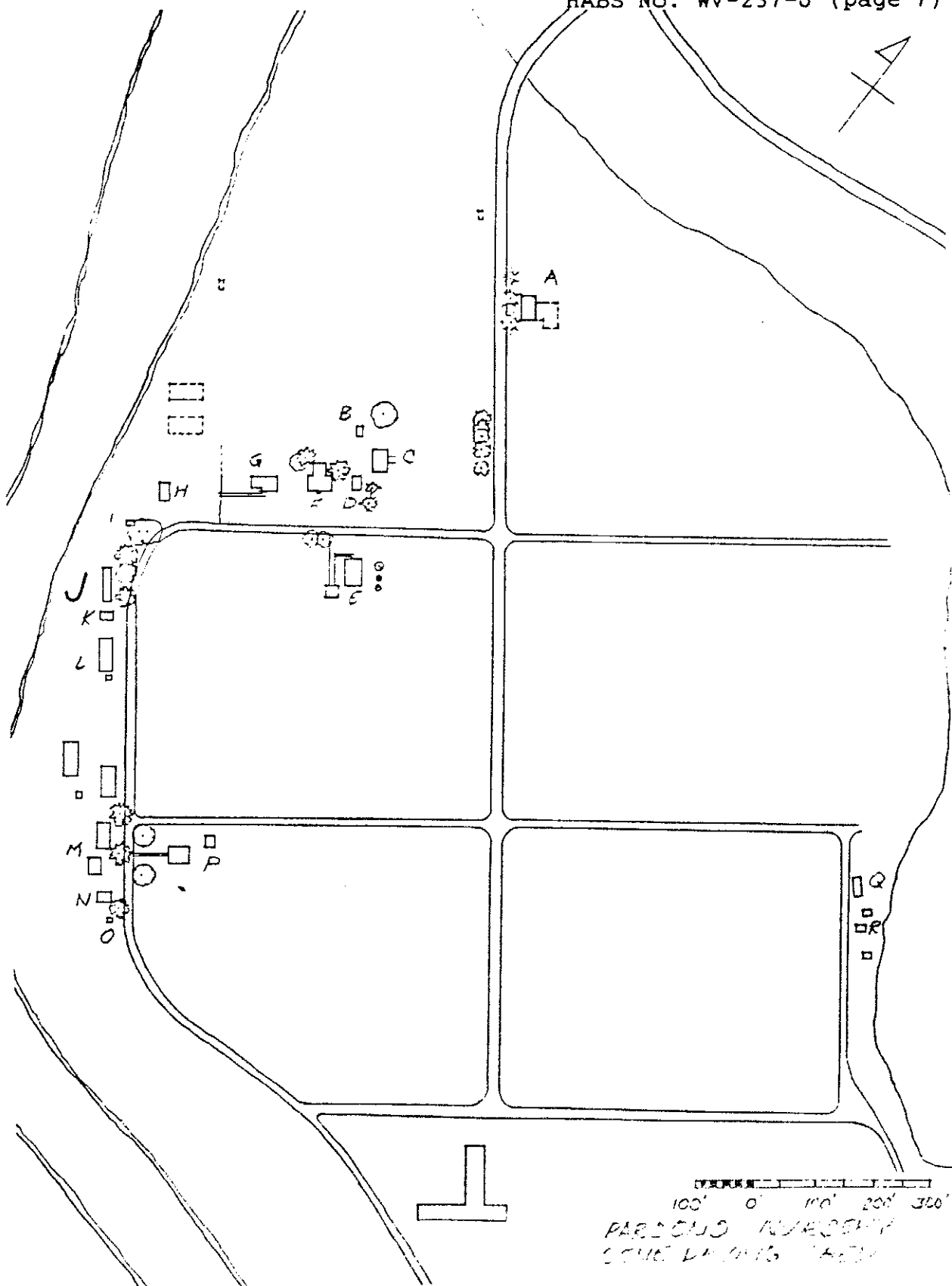
- A. Architectural drawings: None.
- B. Historic views: Forest Service photographs, Monongahela National Forest Office, Elkins, WV.
- C. Interviews: Al Allison, 7-23-1989, Charleston, WV, Parsons Nursery manager, 1952-57; John King, 9-5-1989, Wanakena, NY, silviculture supervisor, CCC Camp Parsons, 1933-42; Dorsey Knight, 10-25-1989, Parsons, WV, Parsons Nursery employee, 1932-1951.

D. McKim, C. R., Monongahela National Forest History,  
unpublished manuscript, November, 1970.

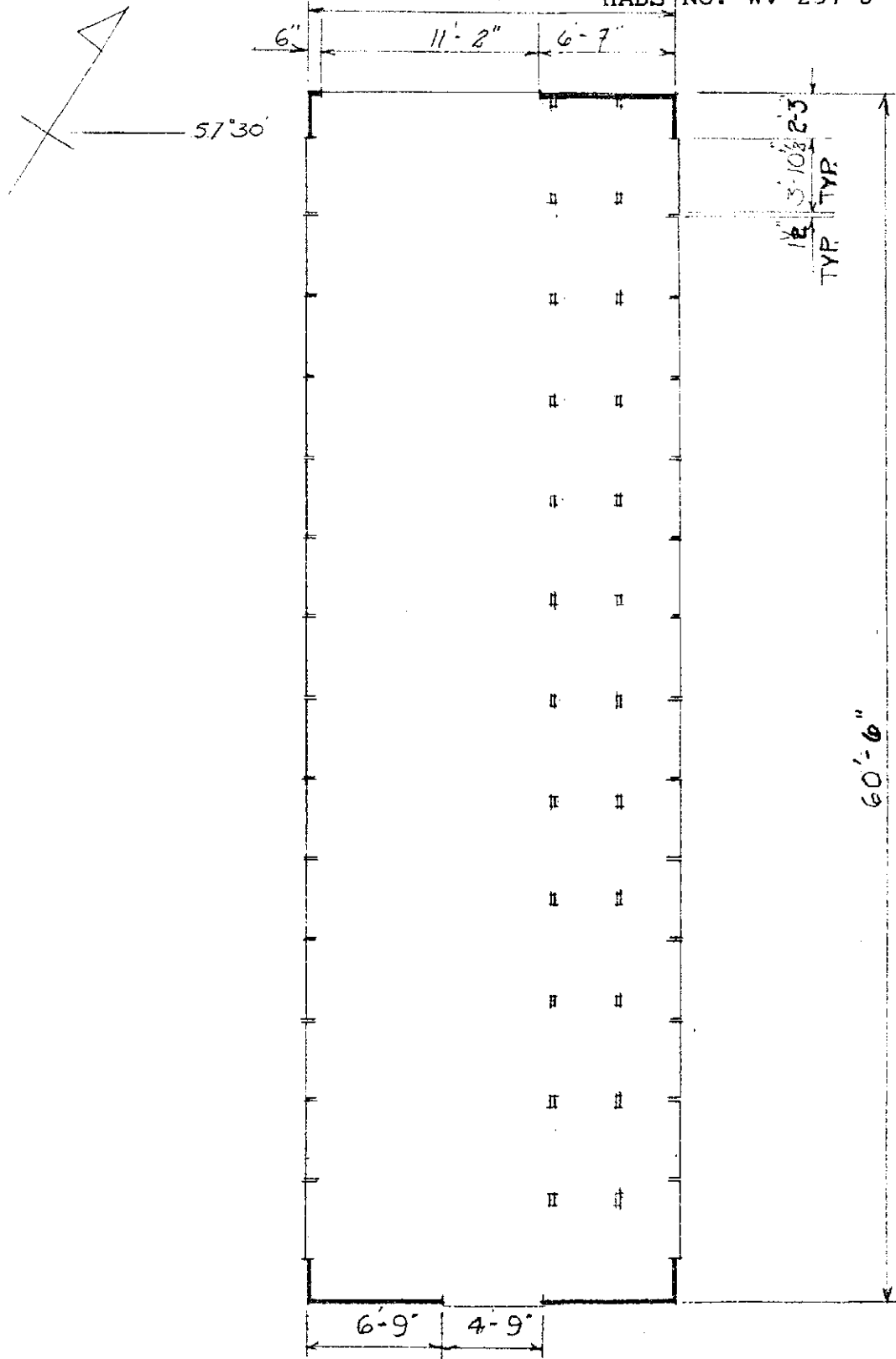
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The architectural and historical documentation of the Parsons Nursery site has been undertaken to fulfill a memorandum of agreement signed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the West Virginia SHPO and the USDA Forest Service as part of requirements under regulation 36 CFR 800 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Recording has taken place prior to substantial modification and/or removal of structures damaged by a flood in November, 1985.

This documentation has been prepared by: Rebecca M. Rogers,  
Preservation Consultant, 44 Audubon Road, Youngstown, Ohio,  
under contract to Monongahela National Forest, April-November,  
1989.



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